



February 10, 2016

Testimony on Proposed Bill HB 5044: AN ACT Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30. 2017

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*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education, a statewide professional organization representing providers of mandated adult education, workforce development and, in collaboration with community colleges remedial education.*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations:

Beyond the mandated education areas of basic academic skills, high school diploma readiness, English language development and citizenship preparation, adult education programs in the state have also been involved in the improvement of remediation efforts in the community colleges and in workforce development. It is funding related to these two areas, remediation and workforce development, that I would like to address briefly with you tonight.

For the past five years, the state legislature has worked to redirect college remediation efforts to make them more focused, more efficient and more successful. Pilot programs in three adult education districts were funded as a part of this effort. Evaluations done by the Connecticut Association of Human Services, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund and the colleges themselves have all shown that these pilots, as well as more recent collaborations between additional colleges and adult ed programs, to be successful.

Last year the legislature dedicated funds specifically to promote additional remediation cooperation between the state's community colleges and adult education programs. This is the kind of targeted funding necessary to change entrenched and unsuccessful programs when more cost-efficient and successful options are available. We strongly urge that the legislature not surrender its line item control of spending by adopting the proposed consolidation of department operating funds. There are instances such as college remediation where performance improvement requires more scrutiny and direction than simply bottom line compliance.

In the related area of workforce development, we urge greater direction and support for community college credentialing programs, whereby participants can more quickly obtain industry-recognized certification and obtain living wage jobs in targeted sectors of our state economy. Through contextualized basic skill instruction, such time-limited programs can more efficiently bring lower-skilled learners up to post-secondary levels without the excessive "remedial-first" classes that have been required for two-year associate degrees. Support for credentialing programs may require combing of state, federal and industry-supported funding, but in the long run will more quickly get our state economy, and tax revenue, growing again.